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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 002026

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SUBJECT: IRAQ NATIONAL ACCORD CONFERENCE DELAYED TO AUGUST

REF: STATE 94495

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Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for
Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Pol/C delivered on June 12 reftel points to Arab League Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Bin Hili and Ambassador to Iraq Mokhtar Lamani. Bin Hili said that the Iraqi National Accord Conference scheduled for June 20-22 was pushed back to the first week of August due to a date conflict with a meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Baku. He confirmed that the agenda would include the 6 points from the November communiqu7 following the Cairo preparatory meeting but could include other issues as well. Bin Hili was noncommittal in response to Pol/C stress on emphasis on leaving the issue of MNF-I troop presence to the government of Iraq, noting, "it is not our role to tell the Iraqis what to or not to talk about." Lamani asked how parties that decided to join in the political process could now do so since the government was already formed. PolCouns responded that the GOI was working on a national reconciliation plan that would include a variety of ways for people to come back into the political process. Bin Hili said that a bilateral dialogue between Iran and the US would be viewed negatively by Arabs. End summary.

Conference Schedule

¶2. (C) Pol/C met Arab League (AL) Assistant Secretary General Ahmed Bin Hili and AL Ambassador to Iraq Mokhtar Lamani on June 12 to learn the results of his consultations in Baghdad for the National Accord Conference and to deliver reftel demarche points. Bin Hili said that the Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) asked for a postponement of the June 20-22 AL National Accord Conference in Baghdad because the dates conflicted with those of the OIC conference in Baku. After consultations with Iraqi leaders, the AL league decided to postpone the Accord Conference until the first week of August. In the meantime, he continued, a small group of Iraqis will be asked to come to Cairo in July to agree on the specifics for the conference. Bin Hili met with Prime Minister Nuri Maliki, Speaker Mahmud Mashadani, former PM Ibrahim Ja'fari, Deputy President Tariq Hashimi, political leaders Abdul Aziz Hakim, Adnan Dulaymi, Ayad Allawi and others.

¶3. (C) Bin Hili confirmed that the AL invited the Foreign Ministers of the 22 AL countries, Turkey, Iran, the P5 and the UNSG. They also invited the EU and Spain,

Germany and Italy, countries that expressed an interest in attending. The Foreign Minister of Malaysia was invited as the Chairman of the non-Aligned Movement. He confirmed that the Sadists continued to insist, as they had in Cairo that no foreigners be allowed in the conference. Bin Hili said that Ambassador Lamani told Muqtada al-Sadr on May 31 that foreign guests would attend the opening session, as is customary in these types of events, but that the discussions will involve only the Iraqis.

¶4. (C) Bin Hili talked about the Iraqi opposition groups that he intended to invite. Terrorist groups like ALQ are excluded, he said, but the AL League intended to reach out to some of the 6-7 Ba'athists groups active in Iraq. Referring to reports that the USG was in dialogue with some insurgent groups, Bin Hili asked what was the US objective in these talks. Pol/C said that the U.S. saw no role for groups or individuals involved in terrorist activities or former regime elements dedicated to the overthrow of the Iraqi government. Beyond that, we would encourage outreach and dialogue aimed at those who, even if opposed to Coalition presence in Iraq, were willing to commit themselves to finding solutions for their grievances through the political process.

Conference Agenda

¶5. (C) Pol/C went through all reftel points. When asked if the agenda would include the six points noted in the communique following the November preparatory meeting in Cairo, Bin Hili said these points will be updated following consultations with the Iraqi government, political parties, and others. The focus will be on internal differences but the occupation of Iraq, he

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continued, was of concern to a number of Iraqi participants. Iraqis only want Iraqi troops to have a security role in Iraq, he added. There must be a clear change in the security matter, he said. The AL was seeking a result where there would be no winner and no loser. Bin Hili said that the Iraqi Army needed professionals from the "prior period" and they should be allowed to rejoin. The current Iraqi Police are not professionals, he claimed, and termed them "mercenaries."

¶6. (C) Pol/C stressed that with the installation of a permanent and fully sovereign Iraqi government, the issue of MNF-I presence in Iraq and "legitimate resistance" had no place in a conference devoted to Reconciliation. She noted that the Foreign Minister of Iraq was this week in New York to reiterate his government's appreciation for the continuing role of coalition forces in Iraq. Likewise, it was not appropriate for the Arab League to promote the notion that armed resistance to the government of Iraq--a full member of the Arab League--was in any way "legitimate." Bin Hili said that he wanted to be clear, "it is not our role to tell the Iraqis what to or not to talk about."

¶7. (C) Lamani, searching for ways to induce insurgents to join the political process, asked that "if the train had left the station, what is the mechanism to get people left behind on the train?" The AL is listening to both sides, those who are participating and those who are not, he continued. Pol/C rejected the notion that those who came late into the political process could never catch up. She also reminded Lamani that the GOI was working on a national reconciliation plan that would likely include a variety of ways for people to come back into the political process including measures to deal with De-Ba'athification, reintegration of militias and insurgent

groups, and prisoner releases. The reconciliation plan is still under discussion, but the Arab League conference should focus first and foremost on supporting the government of Iraq's efforts to achieve national reconciliation.

¶8. (C) In response to Pol/C's request that the conference also involve political and financial support for the new government, Bin Hili noted that the issue of Iraqi debt forgiveness was raised in November at the Cairo meeting. A number of the AL States said they would wait for the unity government in Iraq before proceeding further.

¶9. (C) Bin Hili raised a specific concern about reports of pending large scale military operations in Anbar and Ramadi. He had heard that MNF was telling the population to leave to make way for military operations. He asked for clarification on military operations which can have a negative impact on the conference. Without speaking to the specific reports, Pol/C assured Bin Hili that MNF-I was deeply supportive of national reconciliation goals and promised to relay his specific concerns.

¶10. (C) On June 14, Iraqi Deputy Foreign Minister of Policy and Planning Labeed al-Abbawi told PolOff that Deputy Foreign Minister of Finance and Administration Saad al-Hayani will attend the July preparatory meeting in Cairo for the Arab League conference. He plans only to bring two staffers with him to the meeting. (Note: Al-Hayani was originally slated to become the next Ambassador to Jordan, however, Ambassador to Cairo-designate Deputy Foreign Minister of Multilateral Affairs Hajj Hamoud al-Bidan may not assume post (due to surpassing retirement age) so al-Hayani will go to Cairo as the new Ambassador. End note.) (Comment: When FM Zebari returns, we will urge a strong GOI role in the AL preparatory meeting to assure a constructive agenda and outcome. End comment.)

KHALILZAD